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## THE ADMISSION OF ALBANIA IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

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### **Abstract**

*This paper aims to focus on the questions of how important was the admission of Albania to the League of Nations as well as what was the reason of the change of attitude of the Great Powers and neighbors against Albanian candidature. In the paper is scrutinized the situation of Albania before membership in the League of Nations as well as the reasons that led it before this international body. The topic is interesting as the scrutiny of this moment of Albanian history in international relations helps to understand the events that followed in 1920s and how contributed this admission on the issue of borders and on international recognition.*

*Key words: Albania; League of Nations; International Recognition; International Organizations; Albania-Great Powers Relations*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The First World War; the conflicts between the Great Powers, as well as the claims of neighboring countries upturned every achievement of Albania in 1913.<sup>1</sup> The situation in Albania in 1919 it steadily worsened since the Paris Peace Conference (1919) did not solve the Albanian issue. British government, through its agents tried to encourage the Albanian people by a congress, to form a national government instead of the government of Durres which was under the influence of Italy, which in the meanwhile, allowed in Paris, on 14 January 1920, an agreement on the issue of the Adriatic between Lloyd George and Nitti through which was decided the dismemberment of Albania (Vilamasi 2000, 128). Italy was still determined to keep Vlora and a mandate over Albania. Determination of Italy encouraged the claims of Greece and Yugoslavia in Albania and reports that Italy was willing to accept these claims, along with the failure of the Albanian delegation led by Turhan Pasha to the Peace Conference to achieve recognition of fair requests of Albania, caused harsher anger in the country. At this time in the north of the country began the unrest favoring the masses against the Italians, while the interim government of Durres who had been inclined to cooperate with them (assuming the basis of the Declaration of general Ferrero), lost the trust of people.

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<sup>1</sup> The Allies and Turkey signed the Treaty of 30 May 1913. This treaty established the evolution of the situation in the Peninsula after the Turkey's collapse. In that treaty, was discussed also the Albanian case, whose independence was preliminarily recognized, but its destiny was in the Great Power's hands. On 29 July 1913, the Great Powers declared Albania as an independent state and gave it an international special status (Puto 2001, 278-280).

During the celebration of the Day of Independence of Albania in Vlora on November 28, 1919, there were incidents, which increased popular anger. During this time, the Greek press reported Venizelos-Tittoni Agreement, which engaged both sides, Greek and Italian to support in the Peace Conference each other's claims, notice that raised discontent in the country (AQSH, F. 251, V. 1919, D. 37). The Albanians, disappointed from the oscillations of the European diplomacy regarding the solution of their problems as soon as possible, vitalized their political activity, assembling the National Congress of Lushnje. On 28 January 1920, convened in Lushnje a National Congress headed by Sulejman Delvina which main purpose was "the full independence of the country." In the announcements of the Congress's opening activity, there was expressed the wish that the Albanians could live in friendly harmony with their neighbors. Regarding Italy, in the Congress announcement it was hoped for Italy to take in consideration the Albanian nation's will and to change its policy toward the Albanian case, giving up to its previous policy and protect the Albanian independence (AQSH, Bisedimet e Këshillit Kombëtar v.1920, 9-10).

Lushnja Congress laid the basis of the internal organization of the state. The new government headed by Suleiman Delvina was formed. Legislative power was given to the Parliament, which met for the first time on 27 March 1920 (Fischer 1996, 29-31). With the establishment of the National Council was the first time since 1912 that the Albanian state was fitted out with a legislative chamber and began regular parliamentary life (Historia e popullit shqiptar Vëll. III, 2007, 146-147).

The government that was formed by the Congress of Lushnja should take in hand the state administration, to extend it across the country, especially in regions that were at risk to secede from Albania, and then require the evacuation of different invaders. From the fulfillment of these tasks would depend the success of diplomatic efforts to ensure the territorial integrity of the independent Albanian state and its re-recognition internationally (Historia e popullit shqiptar Vëll. III, 2007, 148). Delvina's government initially put forth its powers to all provinces administered from Durresi's government. In February 1920, it managed to extend its administrative jurisdiction in most of the territory under Italian occupation. On 11 March, the Tirana government forces entered the town of Shkodra and its surroundings, which were under Allied garrison, from which they took over the direction of the city. At this time, the French contingent left Shkodra and only the Italian one remained. On March 13 was declared the unification of Shkodra with the National Government of Tirana. At the beginning of March 1920, the government of Tirana asked to the Rome's one, through the military command in Vlora, to review its position by respecting the national rights of the Albanian people, but the latter refused to enter talks with the Albanian side, especially on the issue of sovereignty over Vlora (Historia e popullit shqiptar, Vëll.III, 2007, 147-149). On June 1919, the Francesco Nitti's government came to power, whose political goal was the reduction of military costs. The military and the civilian authorities thought the reduction of military forces in Albania. Only in the region of Vlora, the forces were not reduced. The commander of the Italian troops in Albania; a few days before the beginning of war sent information to Rome, summarizing the core of international political conjecture. The idea that if Italy withdraws from Vlora, other nations also, Greece and Yugoslavia would withdraw their respective claims, was being instilled more and more in the minds of the Albanian people, and this thought was

expressed in this formula: “*Saving Vlora means to save whole Albania*”- emphasized Settimio Piacentini, the Italian General (Çami 2007, 223-225).

On 3 April 1920, the Albanian government asked the Italian occupation authorities in Vlore, the administrative unification of the region with the rest of the country. In response to this request, the Italian government appointed as high commissioner in Albania F. Castoldi, claiming the validation of the former agreement of the 20 August 1919 with the Albanian government of Durrës. The vice-minister of the Foreign Affairs of Beograd, Popovitch, expressed the official position of Beograd, who preferred mostly an independent Albania according to the 1913's borders, rather than an Albania under the Italian mandate, but he refused to withdraw the Serbian forces as requested from Albania. This withdrawal was conditioned by the Yugoslav diplomacy with the first evacuation of Italian forces from Albania (Historia e popullit shqiptar, Vëll. III, 2007, 153-154).

Under these circumstances, with the possibility of a potential conflict with Albanians or Yugoslavs, the political crisis in Italy, the protest Albanian colony in Italy against the proposed separation of Albania and the attitude of President Wilson, the Italian government was convinced finally that the best course was the withdrawal, negotiating meanwhile with the Albanian government a protectorate over the country and insisting on confirmation of Albania's borders as they were set in 1913 (Swire 2005, 258).

Italy-Yugoslav controversy due to the presence of Italian troops in Vlora was growing steadily. In these conditions was held on May 29, 1920 in Barçalla of Dukat an Assembly who decided the initiation of the uprising against the Italian army. While on 3 June 1920, the committee of National Defense sent an ultimatum to Italian general Piacentini where among other things, was told that the Albanian people couldn't accept the Secret Treaty of London 1915 and requested a response within 24 hours for the evacuation of provinces held by the Italian army, otherwise would not assume responsibility for the actions taken (AQSH, F. 251, V. 1920, D.35, 243-244).

The attack initiated against the Italian troops coincided with the change of government in Italy. Italy was embroiled by internal problems, on June 15 came to power the government led by the socialist Giovanni Giolitti. Given this, the Italian left brought a great damage to the efforts of the Italian government to send troops to Albania. Backed by a large liberal majority, he did not hesitate to say that the government was not in favor of a protectorate in Albania but wanted the independence of this country (Dervishi 2006, 121-123). The fighting began on 5 June by the Albanian Volunteers aided by militia. The Albanian government unofficially supported the fighting and for the Albanians, who were on the battlefield was done everything that could be done without identifying themselves to the movement. By the end of June, Baron Aliotti and Colonel Castoldi were sent to Tirana, to negotiate an agreement with the Albanian government, which was discontinued on June 16 by the Albanian side which refused any deal as long it was still in force the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement. On June 23, Vlora was attacked fiercely again. With these developments, on 22 July the Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement was abrogated by a note of Italy against Greece due to lack of secrecy on its part in respect of the terms of the agreement (Swire 2005, 261-262). In these circumstances was signed the agreement of Tirana on 2 August 1920 in which was declared that: “the Italian government as proof of its sense of respect for the sovereignty of Albania on Vlora, and the territorial integrity of Albania will repatriate the Italian troops currently deployed in Vlora and its coast as well as throughout Albania.” (AQSH, F. 251, V.1920, D. 35, 153-155). Thus the signing of the Treaty of

Tirana took Rome every right to seek support from the Peace Conference for its claims in Albania.

On the other hand, by losing its positions in Albania, Italy did not have any interest to allow the fulfillment of the Greek and Yugoslav pretensions; consequently, neither other European Powers could claim the division of Albania in favor of any Balkan Power (Çami 2007, 256-278). After the victory of this war, the attention of the government of Tirana and the Albanian people naturally focused on expelling outside the political borders of 1913 the Yugoslav occupiers, as well as in international re-recognition of Albania's independence (Historia e popullit shqiptar, Vëll. III, 2007, 165-167). Tensions in the north were not the only problem for the Albanian government given that Greece followed the same policy in the south. Only when it could exercise its power in the north and south after overcoming the problems with its neighbors, could be determined its status as an international party. To cope with this situation Sulejman Delvina's government focused the attention on the international reaffirmation of the decisions of 1913 on the recognition of the independence of Albania and its borders. For this reason, in the autumn of 1920, it moved its center of foreign policy activity from the Paris Peace Conference to the League of Nations, which had just been created, based in Geneva, Switzerland (Puto 2009, 285). Undoubtedly, the League of Nations presented advantages compared to the Peace Conference. The Conference was a body in the narrow circle of the powers, outside any control of public opinion, while the League of Nations brought a new element in the international arena; it had to deal with problems based on publicity (Puto 2003, 313). In Paris was accepted that negotiations should be made under public inquiry. For the idealists, this was a good thing. Nations would bring a common understanding, so necessary for the international relations. (Macmillan 2006, 114)

### ***Albania's request of admission to the League of Nations***

On 15 November 1920 the First Assembly of the League of Nations opened in Geneva. On 12 October 1920, Pandeli Evangjeli on behalf of the Albanian delegation in the Peace Conference formed by the Congress of Lushnje with its priority on reconfirming the decisions of the conferences in 1913 and 1914 over the recognition of Albania presented to the Secretary General Drummond the petition of the Albanian government in accepting Albania in the League. In his letter sent to the Secretary-General Drummond, the President Evangjeli, the interim chairman of the Albanian delegation, wrote: "Albanian government as an faithful interpreter of the Albanian people's sentiment to consolidate the peace in Balkan wants to be accepted in the League of Nations and to be participant in the Great Assembly, which will be held in Geneva in the next 15 November" (AQSH, F.14, D.209, 28). Albanian candidacy made the international diplomacy questioning the international status of Albania, which was a defined element in the first article of the League of Nations, which stipulated that: It can be a member of the League each state which was freely governed (Van Ginneken, 203-204). On his answer on 20 October 1920, the Secretary-General of the League Drummond asked to the Albanian government for the original copy of the document that declared Albania's independence or its self-government, even the authentic copy of the declarations of other states to have recognized Albanian government *de facto* and *de jure*. Drummond committed that he would have made known to the members on Albania's request and would discuss it in the Assembly (AMPJ,V.1920, D.

33). At this point, the government of Tirana decided to send in Geneva a special delegation led by Fan Noli, that would arrived in Geneva on 12 November, on the eve of opening the Assembly. The delegation arrived in Geneva on the Eve of opening the First Assembly of the League of Nations. Its members were: Fan Noli, Pandeli Cali, Dr. Adhamidhi and Hilë Mosi. The Albanian delegation on arrival in Geneva would present the documents required by the Secretariat of the League of Nations, respectively: the records of the London Conference of the 30 May and 25 July 1913 ; the Greek-Albanian borders; the London Conference of the 8 and 11 August 1913; the Florence Conference of 19 December 1913; the extract of the Organic Statute of Albania of 10 April 1914; the Protocol of Korça; the Declaration of General Ferrara in Gjirokastra of 3 June 1917; the Protocol of Kapshtica of 15 May 1920 and the extract of the Protocol of Tirana of 2 August 1920 firmed by Manzoni, especially in article III where written: “The government of Tirana declaring her respect towards the sovereignty of Vlora and the territorial entirety of Albania would repatriate its troops located in Vlora and its coast and in other parts of Albania” (AQSH, F.14, v. 1913-1921, D. 209, 14-25). The Albanian delegation argued the Albanian case through a specific memorandum on 22 November 1920, which made a detailed argument in support of the request for accession in the League.

The memorandum treated the Albanian case in some aspects like recognition of the Albanian state and his government before the war, the status of Albania during the war, the recognition of Albanian government after the war, reflecting the real political situation of Albania until that time to clarify that Albania was not a new state created after the war, but it was an independent state since 1913. Albanian's request for accession relied on documents and facts, so the request couldn't be rejected easily. The memorandum sent to Drummond reflected a complete legal platform of fair solution of the Albanian case after WWI, whereby the Albanian case was easy and clear because Albania was not a new state created after WWI, but was an independent state since 1913 (AQSH, F.14, v. 1913-1921, D. 209, 28-38).

Regarding its position during the war, Albania was not a rival of Antanta, it was and stood neutral (at this point must remind that Albania, as Noli wrote, supported French and Italian troops against the Austrian ones). Today, Albania has a parliamentary government elected and supported by its people, as written in the memorandum:

An independent Albanian state is necessary for the peace in the Balkan; Albanians, a powerful and intelligent race has proven now and earlier that they know how to protect their freedom and have tried for their independence. Albania requires and deserves a place among civilized countries of Europe. Albania was recognized from the Treaty of London. On her 54th meeting of 15 July 1913, this Conference officially announced that Albania was declared an autonomous, sovereign and inherited principality under the guarantee of the six Powers. Albania is neutral, and its non alignment is guaranteed by the six Powers (AQSH, F.14, v. 1913-1921, D. 209, 28-38).

About the issue of the borders, Noli wrote to the secretary of the League that the borders were defined in general by this conference, later were established in details from the International Commission. An International Commission developed in Vlore on 10 April 1914 the Organic Statute of Albania. It was signed from the representatives of the six

Powers and Albania, respectively Mehdi Bey, Winckel, Kral, Krajewski, Lamb, Leoni, Petraieff. In its first article of the first chapter of the statute was written:

Albania is indivisible; its territory is unchangeable. The borders of the principality are established by the six Great Powers. These borders couldn't be corrected or changed based on a law and with the prior approval of the six Powers. Adding, as written in the letter sent to the secretary of the League, that the treaties and protocols, which established the sovereignty of Albania and fixed their borders are not being officially denounced from any member of the Powers, that has signed. As a result, they never stopped being valid according to the international law. Albanian government was recognized (*de jure*) officially on 1914 from six Great Powers and from Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece that sent to Durrës their accredited diplomatic representatives. Albania by its side sent her own diplomatic representatives abroad. [...] The newborn Albania was swallowed up by the war. Even though, the war did not change its international status and soon as the war ended, Albania was rebounded, reorganized with a national government, remained sovereign in almost all the territory defined in 1913, with no foreign protections through so many foreign obstacles that everyone through would be insurmountable (AQSH, F.14, v.1913-1921, D. 209, 14-38).

In the letter sent to Drummond was explained even the secret Treaty of London. However, the protests of the European and American public opinion and the historic denunciation of President Wilson stopped the execution of this treaty. Supporting the Albanian case, Noli mentioned in this memorandum even the memoir sent from Yugoslavia to Clémenceau on 14 January 1920, supporting the administration of Albania, as decided in the Conference of the Ambassadors in London in 1913, to a local autonomous government with no foreign intervention (AQSH, F.14, v. 1913-1921, D. 209, 21-22).

After the request for admission in the League, the consultative permanent commission for martial, marine and air affairs in its meeting in San Sebastian engaged in a prior discussion following the report according to article 9 of the pact, in the Council of the League of the Nations regarding the regulation of armaments from the states that would be members of the League. The Secretary- General of the League, Drummond on 20 October 1920 asked Albanian government information about the composition of military force, the mercantile marine and air as well as the civil aviation of Albania. Moreover, information was required for the ground, fleet and air troops that Albania wanted to keep as well as information about the current borders of Albania (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 74).

On 8 November 1920, the Foreign Affairs Secretary and the chairman of the Albanian delegation to the Peace Conference, Mehmet Konica would give Drummond all the required information about the ground troops, since there were no air and fleet force. Regarding the borders, as Konica wrote: "(...) the current government dominates the territory defined by the London and Florence Conference, except the north and north-east which are under the arbitrary occupation of Yugoslavia, and the south-east is invaded by Greece" (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 74-77). By the information given to Drummond, Konica asked him for help about the Albanian case, using his influence to give Albanian the place among the civilized nations of the world.

### *The hearing of Albanian case*

On 15 November in the Assembly of the League of Nations, a special commission was created, which would canvass the requests for admission of non member states. Commission V would examine and write a report to the Assembly for the proposal of these candidatures. It set a sub-commission which would make a report regarding the Albanian candidacy. The sub-commission was composed of:

- The chairman Lord Robert Cecil;
- Members M. Branting delegate of Sweden;
- Sir George Foster delegate of Canada;
- Osusky delegate of Czechoslovakia;
- Mister Tittoni (substitute of mister Pagliani delegate of Italy);
- Mister Viviani delegate of France;
- Winiorksy delegate of Poland (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 78).

On 22 November 1920; this sub-commission would demand the Albanian government to answer with a written response to all its questions beginning with its own recognition. In this way the sub-commission through its five questions wanted to understand if the request of Albania for admission to the League was regular, if the Albanian government was recognized *de jure* or *de facto* by which states. The sub-commission was interested to understand too through its questions, whether Albania had a stable government, defined borders, and which was the territory and population of the country as well as if it was governed freely. It was interested also to understand, which were the acts and statements of government regarding its international commitment and directives of the League regarding the armaments (AMPJ, v. 1920, D.33, 80-84.).

To the question posed by the chairman of the sub-commission Cecil, Fan Noli would respond with all necessary arguments to clarify every question. Regarding the recognition of Albania, Noli answered Lord Robert Cecil that the government of Albania was recognized *de jure* and *de facto* since 1914 from the six Great Powers of Europe as well as Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece as they all sent diplomatic representatives accredited officially in Durres. Noli answered also that present Albanian government had entered into relations with Italy, Serbia and Greece and made negotiations with them for different agreements, which constituted a recognition *de facto* of Albania. Italy at that time had a minister with full power in the temporary capital of Albania (AMPJ, v.1920, D. 49).

As regard to the borders, those were settled in general lines from the Conference of London in 1913 and soon after defined in detail by the international commission. The protocols which contained the case of the Albanian borders were signed by the representatives of the six Great Powers being so recognized by all parties interested, including Serbia and Greece. The power of the present government, wrote Noli to Lord Cecil, is recognized by all districts except some strategic points through the north and north-east border that are occupied by Yugoslavian troops and a small area in north-east of Korça which is occupied by Greece. The area of Albania is nearly 20.000 square kilometers with a population of almost one million habitants. Regarding the government, it is



composed of House of deputies chosen by the people, a council of ministers accountable to the Parliament and a Council of Regency nominated by the national Assembly of Lushnje. Albania is ready to fulfill all its international commitments and respect the directives of the League regarding the armaments (AMPJ, v.1920, D. 33, 83-85). The November 30 Fan Noli wrote to the Assembly of the League Nations regarding the memorandum presented by the Secretary-General of the League of Nations the main object of which was the admission of Albania in the League. The secret Treaty of London of 1915 Noli wrote to the Assembly is not over made officially public by neither Great Powers that signed it, therefore, it cannot have a juridical value within the international law. Furthermore, the international law of Albania never had undergone any change (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 88-89).

The hearing of Albania's admission would have passed two phases before the final decision. The first was characterized by debates in the commission V, and the second phase had to do with the discussions in the plenary session of Assembly, which gave a solution to the Albanian request started from October 12. In a letter sent to Pandeli Evangjeli in Tirana after settling down to Geneva, Fan Noli informed him on the stand of Great Powers and neighbors against the Albanian case. Great Britain and Italy:

[a]re totally indifferent towards the Albanian case. France warmed up and chuckles since the Venizelos fall. The attitude of Greece and Yugoslavia against the case is known but a high official of the Secretariat, and a close and trusted friend of Clémenceau made our work easier and said that from the two obstacles for admission of Albania in the League, Greece was eliminated completely and Yugoslavia maybe, will not oppose very much. The Senator Hafa Saine, delegate of Belgium who is known to me since the United States, told me with a certain level of sureness, which I will it will be as well-founded as he remembers, that Finland and Albania will deal with each other straightway. Spain and Latino-American republics sympathize with us. Even a surprise, Japan winks us! (Jorgaqi 2005, 394).

On 4 December 1920, Commission V took in review the Albanian case based on the sub-commission report charged with the duty for collection of data for Albania. During the discussion in the meeting was clear that the report biased more towards the opponents' position for admission of Albania as well as biased from the opinion of the juridical section of the Secretariat of the League, the ones that it reported the Assembly. The developments in this section were defined by the drafting of a report the Commission directed to the Assembly on 6 December 1920 in which was taken into account the recognition of the Albanian government, the borders, area and population as well the acts and declarations of government regarding international commitments as the directives of the League on armaments (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 119-126).

In his speech of 6 December 1920, Lord Robert Cecil in its capacity as chairman of commission V read the report of sub-commission and declared that was in favor of Albania's admission in the League of Nations. He justified that objections could be made for admission of some states starting from the fact that their survival is in danger because they are conterminous and surrounded by anarchic and unstable neighbors, which are not the case of Albania. Its border is bounded with Greece and Serbia, two known states for their respect towards international delegations. Robert Cecil mentioned that strong national

sentiment of Albania, which was presented as evidence of the continuation of nationhood, saying that, Albania, constitutes a nation because of its unanimous feeling of its inhabitants (AMPJ, v.1920, D.49).

The postponement proposal for admission until the definition of its final status that the Commission made to Assembly was delineated by two attitudes: from one side the grouping against the admission of Albania, which has as its main representative of this shared viewpoint the French Vivian, on the other side the grouping in favor of Albania, which was represented by Lord Robert Cecil representative of South Africa and the Canadian Newton Wesley Rowell.

In the first grouping Vivian the delegate of France was against the admission to the fact that the situation was very delicate and the Assembly could have taken a risky decision that would be against the Politics of Peace. He stressed that admission of Albania was a challenge against the Great Powers which did not set yet the status of Albania (AMPJ, v. 1920, D.33). Viviani's proposal was supported from the Serbian delegate Spalakovic and the Greek one, whose attitude linked with their national interests toward Albanians' territories. In the same line, was the representative of Italy Pagliano, arguing that Italy was not against the admission of Albania in the League of Nations. Italy didn't object the admission of Albania in the League of Nations and wanted to follow a liberal program led by the justice ideals, but according to it, Albania was in the same situation as the Baltic countries regarding their recognition *de jure* and *de facto*. However, Italy supported the idea that the admission of those countries in the organization would encourage the democratic development of their institutions as well as it would be a guarantee to fulfill their internal duties. Even the representative of China Tang Tsaj Fau welcomed Albanian admission but the problems of the *de jure* recognition; the non established borders and the occupation of territories pushed him into the opinion of postponement the admission. Great Britain supported the Albanian case. Robert Cecil would become the advocate of Albania. After Vivian's statements, Cecil declared that Vivian's proposal should 'not be acceptable because the Council can't let the decision of this case be in the hands of a group of states. According to Cecil, there would be no-good news reading on newspapers that the Great Powers want to dictate some issues in the League of Nations. According to him, Albania should be accepted in the League as long as it has all the characteristics to be a state. Cecil proposed the resolution according to which:

The Assembly after reviewing the V Commission's report on accession of Albania in the League was declared pro the accession of Albania in the League. In the same line with him was Rowell, the representative of Canada in the League, submitting all the reasons that led him to support the candidacy of Albania. According to him, the division of Albania and the secret Treaty of London were not facts that Albania was not an independent state (AMPJ, D.33, v. 1920).

In this discussion, was involved even Mister Fisher, representative of Great Britain, who added that the Commission and the Assembly could not overthrow the decision of the Great Powers on this issue. So at the end of the Commission's work there were two resolutions: the one of Lord Robert Cecil, who supported Albania and the resolution of Vivian, who wanted to postpone the admission until the definition of the final status of Albania. Both proposals were voted, where Vivian won with 13 votes in favor

against Lord Cecil with 8 votes. Based on this motion was drafted the Commission's report, which was addressed to the Assembly (AMPJ, D.33, v. 1920, 157).

### ***The membership***

Commission's insecurities which were invalidated from the Plenary Assembly made to name the agreements of 1913 as old, so Albania had no constitution, no borders, was not a state, her international status “should be clarified” (Godart 2015, 253). The legal section of the League wanted information.

After reviewing the Albanian case, it reached in the conclusion that the Treaty of London was valid. That treaty was never implemented, and the decisions of Clémenceau and Lloyd George were canceled to give power to Rapallo's Treaty. It formed its own thought and all comments to verify the situation should be under its orders (Godart 2015, 255-256).

The legal section used as a strong argument to make agreements invalid, the fact that the signatory Powers exercised control over citizens and financial government of Albania. According to the fact that during the war, any control could not be exercised, should these agreements be invalid, since the control is a primary condition? After many questions, the legal section reached in the conclusion that the observance related to the question if the Treaty, and the current agreements are enough to define Albania as “a state governed freely” according to the first article of the Pact (Godart 2015, 255-256).

During this time, the Albanian delegation in Geneva tried to have the Powers' support. Noli, arriving in Geneva, met the British diplomat A. Nicolson and clarified the risk letting Albania out of the League. After getting the British support, he informed O. Herbert. Albania's friend didn't arrive late in Geneva and used his influence over the Canadian delegation and the rest (Jorgaqi 2005, 396). It was crucial, his meeting with Lord Robert Cecil, the delegate of South Africa and the chairman of the General Assembly of the League. Noli ensured the support of one of his neighbor countries, Italy, which knowing the Greek and Yugoslavian interests, would prefer an independent Albania rather than a divided one. This activity would be noticed in the plenary session of 17 December 1920 with the defense of Lord Robert Cecil, Rowell, and Imam to the Albanian case (Puto 2010, 210). During this time, in several European cities were lobbying in defense of the Albanian case. In favor of Albania would also lobby on 4 December 1920 Justin Godart, member of the House of Commons, with Mister Estournelles de Constant who wrote to the chairman of the League, Mr. Paul Hymans saying:

Let me inform you about the unexplained situation where Albania is forgotten by the Sèvres Treaty...Albania has the right to live. Albanian people are European. It served to the allies during the war. It has an autonomous government. Albanians have preserved their customs, language and independence under Turkish domination. It would be a conflict if the League rejects to recognize its existence. I think I accomplished my duty on preventing a huge damage and injustice (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 25).

On 12 December 1920 Mr. Koleci bishop of Zadrime, member of Albanian Parliament on a mission to Rome, sent a telegraphic appeal to all delegates of Catholic member countries of the League of Nations, calling on behalf of the Albanian Catholic

population, for immediate admission of Albania in the League of Nations. Koleci asked help from delegates of these countries by presenting the situation on which the Albanian population was, and proved that it was doing all the necessary to protect its borders. Its rejection would be a great injustice against Albania, which had been independent and sovereign before the war (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 33, 175).

On 14 December 1920, Noli as the chairman of the Albanian delegation sent a memo to the chairman of the Assembly protesting against the France representative, Vivian's motion to postpone the accession to the League until defining its status. Noli argued that the international status was established on 1913-1914 from France, England, Italy, Austria and Russia that guaranteed the independence, sovereignty, neutrality and its borders. The treaties that established the independence were not denounced. Albania during the war declared its neutrality. So, said Noli in his memorandum, the High Council of Allies has no legal right to impose conditions as it was a defeated enemy. The High Council cannot change this international status, only arbitrarily or as a supreme power. Albania, independent and sovereign, today and before war, can't let the council change its destiny, as it is up to Albanians. It does not recognize any treaty or adjustment made without government's knowledge about issues that affects it and can't accept the decision on its status, so should consider the decision invalid. In front of such reality, it begs to the League to give justice and solution. Noli ends saying that Albania's accession would be a sterling relief of invasions since 1912. As rejection would force it to remain mobilized to guard its borders bringing a constant state of war, which would be a danger to peace in the Balkans. Italy recognized the independence and sovereignty in 1920, so did in 1914, as Noli said. Article 2 of Protocol on 20 August 1920 was signed in Tirana from Manzoni, representative of Italy (AMPJ, D. 33, v.1920, 95-96).

On 15 December after the discussion made by Commission V, Estournelles de Constant as senator wrote to Mr. Leon Bougeous, Mr. Viviani and Mantoux to have read the "Journal de Debats", over the attitude of Italy toward Albania to have abandoned its opposition of Albanian's admission. Estournelles noted that after studying the case, that Albania could produce better than other states its international status, because it had its own government; administration, retains its own borders, its lessons, has religion tolerance and security. It has its own language and tradition. It has preserved its own integrity and existence under the Turkish domination (AMPJ, v. 1920, D.33, 177).

Also Aubrey Herbert, described as the greater friend of Albanians, was lobbying in favor of the Albanian case by writing to Drummond and Cecil Harmsworth. He asked Cecil Harmsworth if he could persuade Lord Curzon to take into account the Albanian case. This letter had its effects because on 27 November with a decree of Lord Curzon Mr. Eyers was sent to the Albanian government as an accredited agent of the British government *de facto* (Aubrey Herbert 2012, 379).

The discussion and decision were left to the Assembly of the League as an upper instance, whose one of its main functions was accepting new states in it. The Assembly reviewed the Albania's petition in the plenary session of the 17 December 1920. The discussion in the Assembly started with Lord Robert Cecil's intervention, which was followed by other interventions, which led to different views from the previous. The Albanian candidacy gained another approach from the members of the League of Nations. Important personalities gave their contribution in the Albanian case. The historiography of the time shows that Fan Noli's figure was one of the most mentioned because of his election

as the Albania's representative in the League of Nations and the role he took. Nevertheless, Albania's admission in the League of Nations came as the result of the changes in the foreign policy of Great Britain toward the Albanian case, whose support was reflected from its dominions, even from the British representation itself, Fisher. During that time, the British government showed interest toward the Albanian underground's case.

It informed Iliaz Vrioni that if Albanian government gave to Great Britain the exclusive right to search for kerosene in an area of 200.000 hectares and if after the positive results would give in concession to the Anglo-Persian (Iranian) Society for the exploitation of the kerosene in an area of 50.000 hectares of petrol ground, in her own choice, even composed of dissociated parcels than as a reward the British government would make it possible for the admission of Albania in the League of Nations. In front of this proposal, the prime minister together with Mehdi Frashëri, the interior minister and Xhemil Dino, advisor of the prime minister tried to study the case taking in consideration the opinion of Xhemil Dino, as an expert. However, at the time there were no persons, which had knowledge about the case, so the government accepted the Society's condition and made a commitment to it through a letter, which was not even archived, but remained in the pocket of the prime minister, as Sejfi Vllamasi recalls (Vllamasi 1995, 167-168).

So Lord Robert Cecil, the representative of South Africa, the Canadian representative Rowell defended with all the necessary arguments the Albanian case. Cecil, on his defense noted that Albania had all the required characteristics of a state. He used the religious argument in his defense saying:

We frequently spoke about our sympathy toward Christian countries. However, we should demonstrate that even Christians or Muslims, there are equal obligations to every nation despite their religion, and we should take advantage to give justice to a Muslim country as we gave to the Christians ones. We often talk about people's rights, nation's freedom, to share these values that we talk about, sometimes more than we should talk, we could not do this without risking the human's aspirations. We should build our future; build the new world on great facts of human nature, in which the desire on independence is one of the most manifested. Who knows Albanian history, also knows its patriotic power since Albanians just like other people in their history showed through wars for freedom and existence this patriotism and Albanian patriotism is strong as the French and Swiss ones. Albanians want their independence and have defended it through wars. You should base your organization on great facts of human nature and nations' vast aspirations. There is no greater fact like the nation one. There is no greater aspiration as the desire of national freedom. In the name of people's aspiration, in the name of human freedom, I ask you to accept Albania in the League of Nations (AMPJ, v.1920, D.49).

In the review of the Albanian case, it was noted the position of the British representative Fisher, who said that after the review of the Albanian case Britain was ready to accept the proposal of the Lord Cecil voting pro Albania's accession. After Fisher's position, Ali Imam said that the accession of Albania in the League would be impressive to the Islam world. After him, the French representative Viviane agreed to join Lord Robert Cecil's proposal and was in favor of Albania's admission. The French representative was

followed from the Italian one, Schanzer, who declared that Italy wanted the freedom, the independence and the progress of Albania. Schanzer, after reminding the Gioliti's declarations, said in the Assembly: "Based on the general principles that inspire us and wanting that Albania be a peace element and order in Balkan Peninsula, we vote for the accession of Albania in the League of the Nations. Same decided the representative of Romania, Mr. Negulesko" (AMPJ, v.1920, D. 49). After this declarations focused on Albanian case, the chairman of the Assembly Mr. Paul Hymans declared the end of the debate inviting the members of the Assembly to vote on this case (Swire 2005, 273). The voting was unanimous for Albania with 35 votes in favor, 7 votes abstention and none against (AMPJ, v. 1920, D. 49). Albania was accepted on 17 December 1920 as a member of the League with the reserve that its accession would not affect the future decision of the Ambassador's Conference regarding its borders (Swire 2005, 273). It became the first state to join an international organization, without providing initially a diplomatic recognition (Aubrey Herbert, 383). Its admission brought next the establishment of the borders from another Conference, the one of Ambassadors in London as brought later the setting of the diplomatic relations. With its admission in the League, Albania found an extraordinary force in its quality as a member and urged to have a referee just in case or to raise its voice in the Military Penalty Tribunal because with its admission, the occupation and the insecurities of the diplomatic activities were present. To Albania, its accession in the League was a positive act of justice (Godart 2015, 256).

## **CONCLUSION**

The Peace Conference did not solve the Albanian case. The admission of Albania in the League of Nations and its recognition as a country became reality thanks to the Great Britain's advocacy. It advocated the Albanian case in exchange of concessions regarding kerosene. In British politics after the First World War, oil prevails and not ideals, writes Aubrey Herbert in his memoirs (Herbert, 361). The overturn of the situation, except this reason, should be seen also in the light of the political change situation in Greece in which the Prime Minister Venizelos an ally, had just lost its power and on 5 December a plebiscite decided the rise to power of King Constantine I, which the Allies had dethroned three years ago because of his pro-German claims. His return to power urged Britain and France to reconsider their support for the territorial expansion of Greece. (Herbert 2012, 383) The first thought was that the membership in this international organization would guarantee immediately its border integrity as it was outlined in 1913 in the Conference of Ambassadors in London and the security by the aggression of neighboring countries. It would take another year to solve the pending issues. The issue of borders was solved by the decision of the Second Conference of Ambassadors in London from which the League of Nations withdrew recognizing the competency of this body. On November 9 1921 the Great Powers winners of the war precisely Great Britain, France, Japan and Italy recognized Albania's borders and its government. Then it was up to local actors to deal with stabilization and economic development.

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